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Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts Foundation Awards Nearly \$300,000 in Grants to Support Nonprofits During COVID-19 Pandemic

BOSTON (May 28, 2020) – The [Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts Foundation](#) has awarded nearly \$300,000 in grants to 20 nonprofits across Massachusetts to support their efforts to expand and adapt operations in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Foundation is awarding Special Initiative COVID-19 Response Grants to 10 nonprofits that predominantly serve people of color, rural communities, people experiencing homelessness, and other at-risk populations. The grants, totaling \$250,000, will support increased staffing needs, investments in IT infrastructure to abide by physical distancing guidelines, and changes in programs necessitated by the pandemic.

“Organizations providing critical services across the state are facing significant new challenges during the pandemic, and the Foundation recognized the need to bolster their capacity to respond,” said Audrey Shelto, president of the Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts Foundation. “These grants will help these nonprofits reach and care for some of our most vulnerable individuals and families.”

The Foundation has given one-time, \$25,000 grants to each of the following organizations and their projects:

Advocates, a Framingham-based nonprofit provider of services for individuals who face developmental, mental health or other life challenges. The grant will support Advocates in addressing behavioral health access inequities for the Latinx population by investing in telehealth infrastructure and equipment for six newly hired bilingual clinicians and two medical assistants.

East Boston Neighborhood Health Center, whose mission is to provide accessible, high-quality, primary care to the community without regard to race, income or social circumstances. Funding will support a collaboration with the Chelsea Senior Center to expand COVID-19 food delivery services in one of the hardest hit areas of the state by including medications and pharmacy goods to ensure access to necessary medications and encourage physical distancing.



Father's Uplift helps fathers in Dorchester, Roxbury and Mattapan overcome barriers that prevent them from remaining engaged in their children's lives. The funding will be used to help families meet their basic needs such as food and other necessities so that they can engage in mental health services. The grant will also cover expenses associated with pivoting to remote counseling and therapy services.

Hilltown Community Health Center creates access to high-quality, integrated health care and promotes the well-being of individuals, families and communities in Western Massachusetts. The COVID-19 crisis has increased the number of individuals seeking support. The grant will support increased staff time for patient navigators and community health workers, along with Community Sustainable Agriculture shares for people with food insecurity.

La Alianza Hispana, a community-based organization that provides culturally and linguistically appropriate health and education programs to Greater Boston's Latinx community. The grants will support telehealth services for seniors through the Aliancianos Senior Center and for families with children ages 5 and younger through the Madres y Niños en Proceso program.

The Food Bank of Western Massachusetts provides food to member agencies in Berkshire, Franklin, Hampden and Hampshire counties. Funding will cover increased staffing costs for a program operated in partnership with providers like the Holyoke Community Health Center that screens and matches the growing number of food insecure community members in that region with counseling, referrals, emergency food and other resources to address the social determinants of health.

Massachusetts Coalition for the Homeless seeks to eradicate homelessness from Massachusetts and ensure that everyone has a place to call home. The grant will allow the organization to continue to partner with the Lynn Community Health Center to assist referred families with food and housing assistance and develop plans to address their health-related social needs.

Lowell Community Health Center provides caring and culturally competent health services to people in Greater Lowell to reduce health disparities and empower each individual to maximize their wellbeing. Funding will support multicultural communication and outreach efforts, focusing on immigrants and communities of color, and help expand capacity for medical interpretation to ensure that patients are referred to trusted partners to address health-related social needs.

Samaritans, Inc., a nonprofit that provides life-saving suicide prevention services throughout Greater Boston, MetroWest and across Massachusetts. The award will fund upgrades to IT infrastructure that support a transition to virtual workshops for youths and their caregivers. Samaritans is focusing on individuals in communities experiencing health inequities who are particularly vulnerable during the COVID-19 pandemic.



Martha's Vineyard Community Services oversees an array of services and programs, including mental health services, veteran's services, youth and family services, disability services, and domestic and sexual violence services. Most of its clients are economically disadvantaged and experience wide fluctuations in income, given the seasonality of the island's economy. The pandemic has exacerbated their financial situations. Grant funding will help meet a dramatic increase in client requests for emergency assistance for basic needs such as rent, diapers, supplies and other health related social needs.

In addition, the Catalyst Fund, a Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts employee funded grant program administered by the Foundation, awarded \$49,800 in grants to 10 organizations across Massachusetts addressing COVID-19 in their communities. The grants will help provide basic needs to the vulnerable populations the grantees serve, including individuals experiencing homelessness, older adults, individuals with disabilities, low-income and immigrant families, and youth with mental health conditions.

About the Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts Foundation

The mission of the [Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts Foundation](#) is to expand access to health care for low-income and vulnerable individuals and families in the Commonwealth. The Foundation was founded in 2001 with an initial endowment from Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts. It operates separately from the company and is governed by its own Board of Directors.

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